

companies that announced special dividend payouts in the month of November. This compares to 54 companies in the month of October and 72 companies in November of last year. So we have three times as many companies announcing that they are going to do special dividend payouts in the month of November as we had last year. We have to believe this is a direct result of the administration's plan to raise the top dividend tax rate from 15 percent today to 43.4 percent next year. The top tax rate on dividends next year will nearly triple unless we take action to prevent that.

Rather than raising taxes on America's small businesses, we should reform our Tax Code in a way that encourages economic growth and therefore generates new revenue. Instead of the President's approach to simply redistribute revenue, we should be focused on growing the economy over the long run thus increasing opportunities for wealth creation for all Americans. We know this approach can work because we have done it before. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 lowered rates, broadened the tax base, and resulted in one of the longest economic booms in American history.

Harvard economist Dale Jorgenson recently estimated that the gains available from fundamental tax reform amount to as much as \$7 trillion in current dollar terms. The Joint Tax Committee has projected that revenue-neutral tax reform that lowered rates and broadened the tax base could lead to an increase in GDP by as much as 3.5 percent in the long run.

Mark Feldstein, former Chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, calculated that lowering individual tax rates by only 10 percent, coupled with base-broadening measures to ensure revenue neutrality, would raise over \$500 billion in new revenue related to growth over the next 10 years. That is lowering individual tax rates by just 10 percent. Increasing the rate of economic growth is the single most important thing we can do to ensure greater prosperity for Americans today but also for the coming generations.

A recent report by Third Way, a center-left think tank, highlighted the importance of raising economic growth back to the post-World War II average of 3.3 percent. According to this report, increasing economic growth back to 3.3 percent starting in the year 2018 would result in nearly 2 million additional jobs by the year 2022 and roughly 5.3 million new jobs by the year 2030. It will result in more than \$600 billion in new revenue by 2022 and more than \$5 trillion in additional Federal revenue by the year 2030.

Christina Romer, former Chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers under President Obama, has equated a 1-percentage-point change in GDP with 1 million jobs per year. Given these estimates, there should be a bipartisan consensus that what we

need is higher economic growth, not higher taxes. I would propose that the fiscal cliff is both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a challenge to get the Federal Government's runaway spending under control, but it is also an opportunity for us to make real entitlement reforms and to put in place a structure for comprehensive tax reform next year that will have enormous benefits for our economy.

I hope the President of the United States will soon join the discussion that many of us have been having about comprehensive tax and entitlement reforms. Presidential leadership on both of these critical issues is long overdue and is essential.

We cannot do big things in this country, such as entitlement reform or tax reform, absent Presidential leadership. President Obama has a unique opportunity in his second term to do some things that are desperately needed for this country and to put our country on a path toward fiscal solvency, a trajectory that will ensure a brighter, better, and more prosperous future for generations of Americans. In order to have that happen, we have to have the right policies in place, and those are policies that encourage jobs and economic growth.

The President said in his postelection press conference that his No. 1 priority was going to be jobs and the economy. I could not agree more with that statement. The way we achieve that is by getting fiscal discipline in place through budgetary restraint and by having policies in place that promote robust economic growth. If we look at what solves these problems, the best thing we can do is to grow our economy and then a lot of these debt and deficit issues become much smaller by comparison. It really does come down to growth, but we simply cannot grow the economy by raising taxes on small businesses, job creators, and people out there who are creating the jobs and impact literally millions of middle-class families who are employed by those very same small businesses.

Millions and millions of Americans work for small businesses in this country. If the President has his way, those Americans would see their taxes go up. That is not something we want to see happen in a weak economy.

In fact, it was only 2 years ago in 2010 when the President said that we ought to extend all of the tax rates because we should not raise taxes in the middle of a weak economy. At that time economic growth on an annualized basis was 2.4 percent. Economic growth now on an analyzed basis is 2. We have a weaker economy today than we did in 2010 when the President said raising taxes in the middle of a weak economy would be a mistake and a bad idea.

I agreed with him then, and I hope he will come to the conclusion now that this is a bad solution. I know the President is insistent on higher tax rates, but as I pointed out earlier, if we raise the top two marginal income tax rates

alone, we generate about \$40 billion of revenue next year. If we add to that capital gains and dividend tax rate increases, we get about \$68 billion in additional tax revenue next year, which funds government for just under a week. It simply does not solve the problem if we are talking about fixing the deficit.

On the other hand, what it does do is make it more expensive and more difficult for American businesses to create jobs to get Americans back to work, to get our economy growing again, and to make this country prosperous for future generations.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

WOMEN VETERANS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2012

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to request that we have unanimous consent for S. 3313, which is the Women Veterans and Other Health Care Improvement Act of 2012, which was unanimously supported by the members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee to be moved out of this body today.

This legislation not only builds upon previous laws that we have passed to improve VA services for women veterans and veterans with families, but it also brings a new focus to the need for the VA to do more to help women veterans and the spouses of male veterans have access to assistance for one of the most impactful and serious wounds of these wars, reproductive and urinary tract trauma.

As many of you know, the nature of the current conflicts and the use of improvised explosive devices leaves servicemembers far more susceptible to those kinds of injuries. In fact, Army data shows that between 2003 and 2011 nearly 2,000 of our servicemembers have suffered those kinds of battle injuries.

Like so many of our veterans, these men and women come home and look to returning to their lives, to finding employment, and to starting a family. Yet what they find when they go to the VA is that the fertility services that are available don't meet their complex needs for these injuries. In fact, veterans suffering from those kinds of injuries find that the VA now is specifically barred from providing more advanced assisted reproductive techniques, such as in vitro fertilization or IVF. They are told when they come home that despite the fact they have made such an extreme sacrifice for our Nation, we can't provide them with the medical services they need to start a family—veterans such as SSG Matt Keil and his wife Tracy, who is here with us today. I am so proud of her and her courage in making sure this is available for families like hers.

Staff Sergeant Keil was shot in the neck while he was on patrol in Ramadi,

Iraq, on February 24 of 2007, 6 weeks after he married the love of his life, Tracy. The bullet went through the right side of his neck, hit a major artery, went through his spinal cord, and exited through his left shoulder blade. Staff Sergeant Keil instantly became a quadriplegic. Doctors informed Tracy that her husband would be on a ventilator for the rest of his life and would never move his arms or his legs. Staff Sergeant Keil eventually defied the odds and found himself off that ventilator and beginning a long journey of physical rehabilitation.

Around that same time, Tracy and her husband started exploring the possibilities of starting a family together—something that is a dream of so many young people in America today. Having children was all they could talk about once they adjusted to their new normal. With Staff Sergeant Keil's injuries preventing him from having children naturally, Tracy turned to the VA for assistance and began to explore her options for fertility treatments. Feeling defeated after being told the VA had no such programs in place for her in her situation, Tracy and Staff Sergeant Keil decided to pursue IVF through the private sector. While they were anxious to begin this chapter of their lives, they were confronted with the reality that TRICARE did not cover any of the costs related to Tracy's treatments because she did not have any fertility issues beyond her husband's injury. Left with no further options, the Keils decided this was important enough to them that they were willing to pay out-of-pocket to the tune of almost \$32,000 per round of treatment.

Thankfully, on November 9, 2010, just after their first round of IVF, Staff Sergeant Keil and Tracy welcomed their twins Matthew and Faith into the world—two beautiful children. Tracy told me—and these are her words:

The day we had our children, something changed in both of us. This is exactly what we had always wanted. Our dream had arrived. The VA, Congress, and the American people have said countless times that they want to do everything they can to support my husband or make him feel whole again, and this is your chance. Having a family is exactly what we needed to feel whole again. Please help us make these changes so that other families can share in this experience.

That is what Tracy said to me.

I have heard from these severely injured veterans, and while the details of their stories vary, the common thread that runs through all of them is that these veterans were unable to obtain the type of assistance they needed. Some have spent tens of thousands of dollars in the private sector, just as Tracy and her husband did, to get the advanced reproductive treatments they needed to start a family. Sadly, others have watched their marriages dissolve because of the stress of infertility in combination, of course, with the stresses of readjusting to life after a severe injury, which drove their relationships to a breaking point.

Any servicemember who sustains this type of serious injury deserves so much more. The bill I am here today trying to get passed will give the VA broad authority to offer advanced fertility treatments to the most severely wounded veterans, their spouses, or surrogates. It also gives the VA authority to determine how best to offer those benefits. It reverses this troubling barrier to care and will bring the VA in line with the military, which provides these services to this same group of servicemembers.

This is commonsense legislation. It should pass without delay. In fact, the New York Times recently ran an editorial on this bill, and it said:

In more than a decade of combat overseas, the military and the VA have continually had to adjust to the challenges of new traumas with new treatments, as with the epidemic of brain injuries and post-traumatic stress. Adapting the VA health system to better meet reproductive health needs should be part of that response. It is one compassionate way to fulfill the country's duty to our wounded veterans.

They also noted that even this Congress should be capable of a bipartisan agreement to pass it, and I couldn't agree more. I can't think of any reason why any Republican or Democrat won't join us today in getting this bill passed. This is about giving veterans, who have sacrificed absolutely everything, every option we have to help them fulfill a dream of simply starting a family. It says we are not turning our backs on the catastrophic reproductive wounds that have become a signature of these wars. It says to all of these brave men and women, who didn't ask questions when they were in harm's way, that we won't let politics get in the way of our commitment to them.

The VA has an obligation to care for the combat wounded, and that should include access to the care they need. Our women veterans deserve this, our male veterans deserve this, and our military and veteran families deserve this.

My understanding is that the objections have been removed, and we expect this bill to be passed tonight when we clear the bills as we end discussions. I thank all of my colleagues who have stepped up to make the reality of a family real to these men and women who have served us so well in combat, have come home with extremely serious wounds, and who—because this legislation hopefully will pass this body and hopefully we will get the House to pass it—will then have their dream of having a family become a reality.

I am very proud to have worked on this bill in a bipartisan way to move it out of our Veterans' Committee. My understanding is that we will be able to clear this bill tonight and move it along its way to the President for his signature and give hope to many men and women who served our country to have a family once again.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WIND ENERGY TAX CREDIT

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I come to the Senate floor once again to urge my colleagues to act on extending the production tax credit for wind, otherwise known as the PTC.

If we let the production tax credit, the PTC, expire in the next 18 days—we literally have 18 days before it does expire—that expiration has the potential to cost our economy thousands of good-paying middle-class jobs. We just can't let that happen. Tens of thousands of Americans who work in the wind industry are depending on us to extend this important tax credit and in doing so save jobs and encourage investment in more States, such as my State of Colorado and the State of the Presiding Officer, New Mexico. If we fail to extend the PTC, we risk jeopardizing not only our economic growth but also our capacity, our potential, our ability to continue leading the world in the development and use of clean energy technology.

I have come to the floor over 25 times to speak about this issue, and each time I do, I highlight a different State and what the PTC has done to encourage economic growth. Today I am really pleased to be able to speak about the great State of New Mexico, the State of the Presiding Officer; their wind resources rank 10th in the United States. New Mexico is an impressive example of how wind can be harnessed to create good-paying jobs, support local communities, and produce American-grown power.

I wish to speak specifically about various areas in New Mexico. New Mexico has eight counties with wind projects, as my colleagues can see from the map here. The largest one is the New Mexico Wind Energy Center. It straddles Quay County and DeBaca County, which is located in the eastern central part of the State, in this area here. This is a very impressive project, as the Presiding Officer knows since it is his home State. It opened in 2003. It runs 136 turbines and produces 200 megawatts of power. Located 170 miles south of Albuquerque, it produces enough electricity to power 95,000 New Mexico homes, which is almost half of all the homes powered by wind in the State. So this is an impressive project. The Presiding Officer has probably visited the site and knows firsthand.

In terms of jobs, wind projects employ 500 New Mexicans around the State, and these are really good-paying